

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 SAJ-01 SCCT-01 /057 W
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R 111839Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6473

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 16182

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK (NI)

SUBJECT: NORTHERN IRELAND: PLP CONTINUES TO SUPPORT
HMG POLICY

REF: LONDON 15705

SUMMARY: WILLINGNESS OF HMG TO CONTINUE CURRENT NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY HAS RECENTLY BEEN CAUSE OF CONSIDERABLE CONCERN IN BOTH ULSTER AND REPUBLIC. ANALYSIS OF DECEMBER 5 HOUSE OF COMMONS VOTE TO EXTEND NORTHERN IRELAND EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ORDER REVEALED NO SIGNIFICANT EROSION OF SUPPORT IN PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY (PLP) FOR GOVERNMENT POLICY. VOTE ALSO INDICATED SOME 24 TO 30 LABOR MPS OPPOSE CURRENT POLICY. END SUMMARY

1. REPORTS OF INCREASED CONCERN IN NORTHERN IRELAND AND REPUBLIC ABOUT POSSIBLE LESSENING OF HMG'S RESOLVE TO CONTINUE ITS CURRENT NI POLICY AND STICK IT OUT IN THAT PROVINCE HAVE PROMPTED EMBASSY TO REMAIN ESPECIALLY ALERT TO INDICATIONS THAT THIS RESOLVE MIGHT BE WEAKENING. IN RECENT MONTHS EMBASSY HAS, ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, REPORTED THAT IT COULD PERCEIVE NO SIGNS OF WEAKENING GOVERNMENT WILL IN THIS REGARD, THOUGH IT DID NOTE THAT SMALL GROUP
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OF LABOR MPS, MOSTLY LEFT-WING, FAVORED PROMPT GOVERNMENT

STATEMENT OF INTENT TO LEAVE ULSTER AND/OR WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH TROOPS (REFTEL). THIS OPPOSITION GROUP HAD BEEN ESTIMATED TO INCLUDE 16 TO 18 LEFT-WING MPS, PLUS PERHAPS ANOTHER DOZEN MORE MODERATE MPS WHO OPPOSE CURRENT POLICY FOR VARIETY OF REASONS, INCLUDING CONSTITUENCY PRESSURES. THESE JUDGMENTS WERE BASED LARGELY ON SUBJECTIVE DATA, PRINCIPALLY CONVERSATIONS WITH GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, MPS AND JOURNALISTS.

2 DECEMBER 5 HOUSE OF COMMONS VOTE TO EXTEND NI EMERGENCY PROVISIONS ORDER, WHICH INTER ALIA SUSPENDS SOME CIVIL LIBERTIES AND AUTHORIZES DETENTION (INTERMENT), PROVIDED OPPORTUNITY TO ASSESS SIZE OF OPPOSITION BLOC MORE ACCURATELY. ANALYSIS OF THIS VOTE AND RELATED DEBATE, EXPLAINED IN GREATER DETAIL BELOW, LEADS THE EMBASSY TO CONCLUDE THAT THERE HAS BEEN NO SIGNIFICANT DETERIORATION IN PLP SUPPORT FOR THE GOVERNMENT'S NI POLICY. MORE OVER, WE CAN DETECT NO SIGNS WHICH WOULD INDICATE THAT THE BIRMINGHAM BOMBINGS OR THE SUBSEQUENT ANTI-TERRORIST ACT (LONDON 15677) RESULTED IN A SIGNIFICANT SHIFT IN PLP ATTITUDES TOWARD NI.

3. GOVERNMENT CALLED ROUTINE "TWO LINE WHIP" (MEDIUM IMPORTANCE) FOR MOTION TO EXTEND EMERGENCY PROVISIONS, WHICH WERE LAST EXTENDED FOR SIX MONTHS IN JULY, BUT MADE NO SPECIAL EFFORT TO ENSURE PARTY DISCIPLINE, PRESUMABLY BECAUSE IT WAS CONFIDENT IT COULD COUNT ON SUPPORT OF CONSERVATIVES AND MOST MINOR PARTIES. ALSO, HOUR SCHEDULED FOR BEGINNING OF DEBATE, 10:00 PM, INDICATES GOVERNMENT DID NOT ATTACH SPECIAL IMPORTANCE TO THIS MEASURE. IN DIVISION OCCURRING AT 11:30 PM, SPARSELY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 LONDON 16182

ATTENDED HOUSE VOTED 91 TO 22 IN FAVOR OF EXTENDING
PROVISIONS FOR SIX MONTHS.

4. BREAKDOWN OF VOTE FOLLOWS. FOR: LABOR, 71; CONSERVA-
TIVE, 11; ULSTER UNIONIST, 8; LIBERAL, 1; TOTAL IN
FAVOR, 91. AGAINST: LABOR, 21; SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC LABOR
PARTY, 1; TOTAL OPPOSING, 22. SINCE TELLERS ARE NOT
INCLUDED IN VOTE TALLY, ACTUAL NUMBER OF MPS OPPOSING
MOTION WAS 24. ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT MADE NO SPECIAL
EFFORT TO TURN OUT VOTE OR ENFORCE PARTY DISCIPLINE, WE
UNDERSTAND PLP OPPOSITION DID MAKE SUCH EFFORT, AND THAT
FEW OPPOSITION MPS FAILED TO VOTE. ACCORDINGLY, EMBASSY
BELIEVES NUMBER OF LABOR VOTES AGAINST EXTENSION IS
FAIRLY ACCURATE REFLECTION OF SIZE OF PLP GROUP OPPOSING
GOVERNMENT ON THIS ISSUE. EMBASSY DID NOTE THAT ONE
LABOR MP WHO ADVOCATES PROMPT WITHDRAWAL OF BRITISH
TROOPS, TAM DALYELL, VOTED FOR EXTENSION OF EMERGENCY
MEASURES. HIS ACTION, WE BELIEVE, IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO HIS
SENSE OF OBLIGATION TO THE GOVERNMENT (HE IS VICE CHAIR-
MAN OF PLP) AND HIS RELUCTANCE TO BE PUBLICLY ASSOCIATED
WITH LEFT-WING. FURTHER ANALYSIS SHOWS THAT 15 LABOR
MPS VOTING AGAINST MEASURE ARE MEMBERS OF LEFT-WING
TRIBUNE GROUP, AS WAS ONE TELLER. CONVERSELY, 10
TRIBUNITES VOTED WITH MAJORITY, ILLUSTRATING LACK OF
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LEFT-WING COHESION ON NORTHERN IRELAND ISSUE.

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